

The 249th Anniversary of the Signing of the Declaration of Independence
We are still just 1 Generation away from losing Freedom as we know it.

Rev. R. Brady Henderson

The 249th celebration of the signing of the Declaration of Independence is sure to be one of fun, fireworks, celebrations, and hopefully some temporary unity within our country. It's a wonderful day. But, we must remember it hasn't always been such a 'fun' day.

On July 4th of 1776 there were a total of 56 men to sign the piece of paper (most written by the then 33-year old and future President, Thomas Jefferson) declaring our independence from the most powerful empire in the world. Prior to that point in world history no one had gone against Great Britain and succeeded. It was a daunting task. As many of the signers of this world changing piece of paper indicated in their personal diaries and letters to friends and family, 'to sign this could be a death sentence'. Which was true. John Hancock famously signed his name as large as possible, wanting the King and British Parliament to see his name. The 56 signers came from all 13 of the colonies. But not all 13 of the colonies were as united as those in New England. Each State voted on whether or not to participate. South Carolina was the 9th state to make this decision.

In South Carolina for example, there was a close vote in 1775 on whether to even send delegates to participate in the Second Continental Congress. Ultimately, South Carolina decided to go with the colonies and declare war against England. But in South Carolina, it was very much a civil war. Most historians agree that the wealthy colonial, also known as the 'King of England's Bell Cow', was split 50/50. 50% remaining loyal to the crown and 50% calling themselves patriots. I'm thankful that my 6th great grandfather, Thomas Henderson chose the patriot cause and went north to fight for the cause. But I know this was not an easy decision for him. People like Thomas, had also fought or given aide to the Cherokee War that took place in the Carolina's from 1759-1761. In that war, British soldiers as well as backcountry militia (like my ancestor, Thomas), fought side-by-side with the British. They knew the British who had settled in South Carolina, and had for years.

So, when Edward Rutledge, Thomas Lynch, Jr., Thomas Heyward, Jr., and Arthur Middleton from South Carolina signed the Declaration of Independence they were representing a divided colony. During the war, especially when General Cornwallis came to South Carolina for the 'Southern Campaign', it was neighbor against neighbor. Friend became foe. And not even family could be trusted.

Obviously, on the 249th anniversary of the first 4th of July, we know how the story ended. We know who won the Revolutionary war. It's easy for us to celebrate. But on the first 4th of July,

especially in South Carolina, it was much more precarious. Much more daunting, and ultimately a huge risk was being taken as ink hit the parchment that day in Philadelphia.

Honestly, sometimes it seems like in 2025 we are just as divided as South Carolina was on July 4th of 1776. We've become so divided as a country. We've also become really soft. At times, we're included. We somehow find it hard to forgive others when they do us wrong, we find it hard to treat our neighbors with love and respect, and we even find every excuse imaginable not to be in Church this coming Sunday. I often wonder what the founding fathers would say to us today. Sure, they had their own moral, physical and spiritual issues. But if we aren't careful, we'll fall into the tragic pitfall that many other countries in the history of the world have fallen into. Just remember, we're just 1 generation away from no longer being FREE.

Happy Fourth,

God Bless.

Rev. R. Brady Henderson